MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

27 AUG

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KA-ZAR

THE SAVAGE

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1983

THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER

(looks like this is getting to be a regular feature)

I really like this issue's cover. I liked it when artist Armando Gil showed me his sketch for it. I liked it when he showed me his fully penciled, inked and toned version of it and when cover colorist George Roussos finished coloring it. I liked it when I brought it to editor-in-chief Jim Shooter for final approval.

Jim liked it, too, but he had some misgivings about it. And when I had finished screaming and shouting, jumping up and down, and holding my breath until I turned blue, I had to admit he had some valid points.

What Jim and I both liked about the cover was the obvious unbridled enthusiasm with which Armando had infused it. Here was an artist who loved to draw — and loved to draw KA-ZAR. He put every last bit of himself into the cover, as he did into the story it surrounds.

But the problem with the cover was that Armando had given us, perhaps, too much of a good thing, gotten too involved in detail. All of the illustration's intricate shapes and patterns seemed to detract from the simple drama of a picture of Ka-Zar and Zabu being attacked by a monstrous version of Ramona while Shanna looked on in markedly uncharacteristic fear and indecision. The cover's various elements seemed to somehow be at odds with each other.

Yet, we wanted to go with the cover. Not because it was late — we had lots of time on it. Not because covers aren't ever redone — things are often redrawn around here to get 'em just right. No, we wanted to go with the cover because there was still something about it we liked, some indefinable *specialness*. And we decided we'd resolve our feelings about it by printing it...and asking you folks what *you* think of it.

So tell us. How *do* you feel about this cover? Did it really jump off the rack and grab your eye, or did you buy it because you always buy KA-ZAR? Is the action on the cover and its relation to the story clear to you? Does the coloring help bring out the best qualities of the drawing? Will you remember the cover of KA-ZAR #27 fondly in ten years? Please let us know.

And, hey, here's a challenge to all of you would-be artists. Why not show us *your* ideas for this issue's cover. We'd love to see how you would interpret the wild goings on in this issue. Draw up a rough pencil sketch and send us a clear copy of it (we won't be able to return your originals). We'll print the four best entries in a future issue. So send 'em in to:

THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE
c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South
New York, N.Y. 10016

Take care,

Danny

Danny Fingeroth

P.S. Beginning this very issue, KA-ZAR (along with MICRONAUTS and MOON KNIGHT) will be printed on heavier and whiter *Mando* paper — with no reduction in page count or increase in price. Pretty good deal, if you ask me.
P.P.S. Fear not. The letters column and a fumetti or two will return next issue. See ya then.

And don't forget — you can still ***subscribe*** *to KA-ZAR and* save money. *Fill out and mail in the coupon below and you'll get 12 issues of KA-ZAR for only $8.00 — a big* ***$1.00*** *off the regular price of $9.00. Plus, you'll always get the* lowest price *on renewals and have the right to cancel your subscription at any time if you're not satisfied!*

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TWISTED CORRIDORS

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TERRIFIED! SHE RAN FROM ME AS IF I WERE A MONSTER, AND NOW SHE'S FROZEN WITH FEAR AT THE SIGHT OF ME! SHANNA, WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU, WHAT EVILS COULD YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED THAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEAR YOUR TRUSTED FRIEND?

HER EYES STRETCH WIDE BUT SHE SEES NOTHING!

SHANNA?...

BUT BUTH IS WRONG. SHANNA SEES. SHE SEES THE BULLET THAT FLIES FROM RAMONA'S GUN STRIKE DOWN THE MAN SHE LOVES, SHE SEES KA-ZAR'S BODY AS IT LIES ENTOMBED IN A NEW YORK CITY MORGUE, SHE SEES THE WORDS ON HIS TOMBSTONE, WORDS SHE HERSELF INSTRUCTED THE ENGRAVER TO CARVE.

SHE SEES HER WORLD TURNING GREY AND GNARLED AND THREATENING, EMPTY OF LOVE, EMPTY OF LIFE, EMPTY OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT ONE AGONIZINGLY GUILTY, TORTUROUS THOUGHT, PLAYED OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL THE PAIN OF IT IS UNBEARABLE:

EVERYONE I HAVE EVER LOVED HAS DIED...

IN HER BLOODSTREAM PULSES THE RESIDUE OF COUNTLESS DOSES OF MIND-BENDING DRUGS, ADMINISTERED BY RAMONA'S COHORTS; HER BRAIN IS SCORCHED BY COUNTLESS ELECTRICAL SHOCK TREATMENTS, BUT OF THIS SHANNA IS UNAWARE...

SHE KNOWS ONLY THAT THE WORLD AS SHE SEES IT NOW IS A HIDEOUS AND HORRIFYING PLACE.

N-N-NO! LET GO OF ME! LET GO!

M-MONSTERS! MONSTERS! HE'S DEAD! =SOB!= I WANT TO DIE! KILL ME, TOO!

SHANNA, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING! KA-ZAR'S NOT DEAD, JUST UNCONSCIOUS...

DEAD! DEAD! DEAD!

HUSH... TRY NOT TO STRUGGLE. YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE WHILE I TAKE KA-ZAR TO AERIE SHALAN FOR HELP. ZABU WILL PROTECT YOU FROM HARM--

-- AND THESE ROPES WILL PROTECT YOU FROM YOURSELF.

I'LL RETURN FOR YOU AND SHANNA SOON, ZABU. DON'T LEAVE HER FOR A MOMENT!

IT IS A LONG JOURNEY TO AERIE SHALAN, BUTH'S HOME, BUT HIS ARMS ARE STRONG AND HIS DETERMINATION STRONGER AS HE GAZES DOWN AT KA-ZAR'S HELPLESS FACE...

BELOW HIM THE SAVAGE LAND UNFOLDS IN A DIORAMA OF PAST AND PRESENT, A PERFECT WORKING ILLUSTRATION OF NATURAL LAW. THE BALANCE IS CONSTANTLY MAINTAINED. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST IS THE RULE, THE STRONG FEEDING UPON THE WEAK...

IT IS THE LAW THAT KA-ZAR LIVED BY--AND, TORN FROM HIS JUNGLE HOME, NEARLY DIED BY...

CARRIED ON A GENTLE CURRENT THEY RISE ABOVE THE TOWERING FOLIAGE OVER THE DWELLING THAT KA-ZAR FASHIONED FOR SHANNA WITH HIS OWN TWO HANDS, NOW EMPTY AND UNUSED AND LIFELESS...

THEN, SWOOPING DOWN WITH BREATHTAKING SPEED, BUTH SOARS TOWARD--

--THEN OVER--THE WATERFALL AT THE EDGE OF THE SAVAGE LAND--

--AND INTO THE VAST, EVER-STRETCHING COUNTRYSIDE OF PANGEA!

HERE, TOO, THE FOOD-CHAIN IS UNBROKEN: HUNGRY WOLVES DEVOUR A SICKLY RHINO--

--ONLY TO FALL PREY TO A LARGER, STRONGER BEAST--

--WHICH IN TURN GIVES SUSTENANCE TO ANOTHER, CLOSING THE CIRCLE. HUNTER BECOMES PREY. THUS IS THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.

IN THE DISTANCE LOOMS THE JEWELED CITY OF LEMURA, HOME OF THE CAT-PEOPLE AND ONCE RULED BY QUEEN LEANNE, A WOMAN LONG SINCE LOST AND FORGOTTEN...

BELOW, THE GORAHN SEA CHURNS VIOLENTLY, ANGRILY, ITS GREEN WATERS TEEMING WITH SCALEY LIFE...

...AND, UNSEEN, ON AN ISLAND SET LIKE A GEM IN THIS FITFUL SEA, ANOTHER BIRD-MAN CHANTS PRAYERS BEFORE A WATCHFUL TOTEM...

...PRAYERS THAT HAVE, AS YET, GONE UNANSWERED!

ONWARD BUTH FLIES, PAST THE MOUTH OF THE SMOKE-BILLOWING VOLCANO, MT. FLAVIUS, WHERE HE, KA-ZAR AND SHANNA ONCE FOUGHT AND DEFEATED THE DEMONIC BLACK FORCE KNOWN AS BELASCO...

HE SHUDDERS AT THE MEMORY.

ONWARO FLY BUTH AND KA-ZAR, UNTIL AT LAST...

WE'RE HERE, LORD KA-ZAR!

ANOTHER FEW MOMENTS AND YOU WILL BE IN THE CAPABLE HANDS OF THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC MINDS OF ALL TIME--

--THE PHYSICIANS OF *AERIE SHALAN!*

DOWN AND DOWN...

...AND DOWN FURTHER STILL...

...TO THE VERY DEPTHS OF THE ANCIENT AERIE...

...TO THE HALL WHERE ANCIENT AERIANS HELD RITUALS TO ANCIENT GODS, NOW ALL BUT FORGOTTEN...

...THROUGH A CORRIDOR THAT ONLY THE GREATEST CONTEMPORARY MINDS OF PANGEA KNOW EXISTS...

...TO A DOOR... TO A ROOM INSIDE WHICH THERE MAY BE HOPE...

...FOR THOSE WHOM HOPE HAS SEEMINGLY ABANDONED.

A DESPERATE KNOCK... THE DISTANT POUNDING OF GREAT MACHINERY... A SHUFFLING OF FOOTSTEPS... THEN--

BUTH! WHA--MY GOD, IT'S KA-ZAR! WHAT'S--

CAN YOU HELP HIM, DHERK?

BRING HIM INSIDE...

THESE TWO MEN--THE WINGED AERIAN AND THE ANDROID IN WHOM RESIDES THE GREATEST OF ATLANTEAN MINDS--WERE ONCE BITTER RIVALS OF THE COMATOSE JUNGLE LORD. BUT COMBAT AND ORDEAL ENDURED SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH HIM HAD LONG AGO CHANGED THAT.

NOW THEIR CONCERN IS THAT OF BROTHER FOR BROTHER, AS THEY BRING KA-ZAR INSIDE; AERIAN AND DISIAN ASSISTANTS HURRY TO PREARRANGED SPOTS...

I FOUND HIM AT THE EDGE OF THE SAVAGE LAND. HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS WHEN ZABU LED ME THERE.

WHEN ZABU CAME TO ALERT US EARLIER... I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG. I DECIDED TO GEAR UP FOR THE WORST. THE *RESURRECTION MODULE'S* HIS ONLY HOPE.

MODULE INPUTS ALIGNED...

THINK THEY'LL BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM?

I DON'T KNOW. THIS DEVICE IS THE HEIGHT OF AERIAN SCIENCE... MODIFIED BY DHERK'S RESEARCH. BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S EVER BEEN TRIED ON ANYONE AS *FAR GONE* AS LORD KA-ZAR SEEMS TO BE.

DO... DO YOU THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM, DHERK?

HE'LL NEED A THOROUGH PHYSICAL...

...THEN WE'LL HAVE TO CALIBRATE THE MODULE TO HIS RATE OF METABOLIC DYSFUNCTION.

AND THEN...?

AND THEN WE'LL HAVE TO PRAY.

BUT... DID YOU SEE SHANNA? IS *SHE* ALL RIGHT--?

SHE'S... I... I TIED HER TO A TREE IN THE CLEARING-- ZABU'S WATCHING OVER HER.

DHERK, I'M AFRAID SHE MIGHT BE HOPELESSLY *INSANE.*

...SHANNA...

LOOK AT THEM, BUTH. THEY KNOW HER NAME... THE CHILDREN OF DIS ARE FOND OF OUR SHANNA, TOO.

I'M GOING BACK FOR HER.

I'M GOING TO BRING HER HERE.

WE'VE GOT TO DO ALL WE CAN-- FOR BOTH OF THEM.

BRING ZABU, TOO-- IF HE'S UP TO THE STRAIN OF GETTING HIMSELF HERE AGAIN.

I'LL BET I CAN ADAPT ONE OF THE FLYING DEVICES WE GIVE GROUNDLING GUESTS TO *HIS* USE. HE'LL BE FINE.

IT IS MUCH LATER WHEN BUTH RETURNS...

...WITH A SLIGHTLY AIRSICK SABER-TOOTH...

...AND A FIERCELY STRUGGLING SHE-DEVIL, LASHED TO THE BACK OF A SKITE.

I'D LOVE TO CARRY YOU IN MY ARMS, SHANNA, BUT YOU MIGHT JUST LASH OUT AND *SCRATCH* MY FACE TO PIECES IF I DID...

AND IT IS WITH A HEAVY HEART THAT HE LEADS HIS CHARGES DOWN INTO THE DEPTHS OF THIS TOWERING STRUCTURE IN THE HEART OF AERIE SHALAN.

SOON...

DADDY, *DON'T!* IT'S NOT A PANTHER! IT'S *NOT!* IT'S *NOT!*

ANY IDEA WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT, ZABU OLD BOY?

SHE'S FAINTED. GOOD. I WON'T NEED THOSE SEDATIVES AFTER ALL...

DRUGS DULL THE MIND--AND WE WANT YOUR MIND AS CLEAR AS WE CAN HAVE IT--

-- WHAT'S LEFT OF IT, THAT IS...

KA-ZAR'S VITAL SIGNS HAVE STABILIZED FOR NOW. FROM HIS CONDITION, I'D SAY THAT HIS BODY HAD DIED AND SOMEONE REVIVED HIM, USING SOME CRUDE TEMPORARY METHOD, A STOP-GAP WHICH HAS JUST ABOUT GIVEN OUT.*

WE MUST HEAL HIM PERMANENTLY. IF FATE IS WITH US, WE WILL.

THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WILL TELL THE TALE.

AT ANY RATE, HIS MIND IS INTACT, AND IF HIS BODY FAILS, WE CAN REPLACE HIS PARTS MECHANICALLY.

THERE ARE WORSE FATES... THAN BECOMING AN ANDROID...

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, WE STILL HAVE A PROBLEM. WHAT ABOUT SHANNA?

SHANNA...

*SEE KA-ZAR # 23-26 -- DANNY.

YOU SEE, THE RE-INTEGRATION OF A SPLINTERED MIND SUCH AS HERS IS A MUCH MORE COMPLICATED PROCESS. WE ATLANTEANS DID EXPERIMENT WITH A CURE, BUT IT WAS MORE DANGEROUS FOR THE *DOCTOR* THAN IT WAS FOR THE *PATIENT*.

YOU SEE, IT INVOLVES A PSYCHIC TRIP INTO THE *MIND* OF THE LOST SOUL, A JOURNEY TO RECOVER THE SOUL FROM THE NIGHTMARE IN WHICH IT IS TRAPPED. BUT ALTHOUGH THAT NIGHTMARE APPEARS-- FROM THE OUTSIDE-- TO BE AN ILLUSION...

...IT IS VERY REAL TO THE SOJOURNER, WITH *REAL* DANGERS MORE HIDEOUS AND TERRIFYING THAN ANYTHING HE HAS EVER ENCOUNTERED BEFORE, BECAUSE THE THINGS THAT POPULATE THE TWISTED MIND ARE PRODUCTS OF *INSANITY*.

"DID *YOU* EVER MAKE SUCH A TRIP, DHERK?"

"ONCE, LONG AGO, IN ANCIENT ATLANTIS, A CLOSE FRIEND OF MINE... ACCIDENTALLY KILLED HIS OWN *SON*. HE WAS INSANE WITH GRIEF. I AND TWO OTHER SCIENTISTS WENT SEARCHING FOR HIS TRUE SELF IN THE PLETHORA OF MADNESS HE HAD CREATED TO BUFFER HIMSELF.

"WHAT HAPPENED?"

"I ESCAPED WITH MY LIFE, BUT THE OTHERS WERE TRAPPED INSIDE HIS BRAIN... TORTURED... THEY NEVER ESCAPED... THEIR SANITY WAS DESTROYED..."

"AND YOUR FRIEND?"

"HE COMMITTED SUICIDE SHORTLY THEREAFTER, AND THE OTHERS WHO ACCOMPANIED ME ON MY JOURNEY INTO HIS MIND DIED *WITH* HIM..."

IT WOULD BE A *VERY* DANGEROUS JOURNEY TO MAKE.

BUT WITHOUT THIS TREATMENT, WOULD SHANNA RECOVER?

GIVEN HER PRESENT STATE, I'D SAY SHE'LL PROBABLY BE HOPELESSLY INSANE FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE... IF SHE LIVES...

NO! WE OWE TOO MUCH TO LORD KA-ZAR AND SHANNA TO DESERT THEM IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED!

SEND ME, DHERK! I'M NOT AFRAID TO GO!

NOR I. BUT YOU REALIZE THAT OUR MINDS COULD BECOME TRAPPED WITHIN HERS, AND WE *TOO* WOULD BE DOOMED TO A LIFETIME OF INSANITY?

I'M WILLING TO TAKE THAT RISK FOR SHANNA.

BUT HE'S IN A COMA!

SO AM I, MY FRIEND. AND I'M SURE *KA-ZAR* WILL WANT TO JOURNEY WITH US TO SAVE SHANNA.

TRUE, HE'S GRAVELY ILL, BUTH, BUT HIS MIND IS AS FREE TO TRAVEL AS YOURS OR MINE.

BUT *IS* YOURS, DHERK? AFTER ALL, YOU'RE NO LONGER, HUMAN...

A MIND IS A MIND, BUTH, WHETHER IT BELONGS TO MAN, ANIMAL OR ANDROID...

AND SPEAKING OF ANIMALS, THIS ONE KNOWS SHANNA EXTREMELY WELL. I'M SURE ZABU WILL MAKE AN EXCELLENT COMPANION ON OUR JOURNEY...

ARE *YOU* MAD?!

WE CAN'T HAVE A *WILD ANIMAL* ALONG ON A JOURNEY LIKE THIS!

THIS "WILD ANIMAL" IS A LOT MORE INTELLIGENT AND COMPASSIONATE THAN A LOT OF SO-CALLED *PEOPLE* I KNOW.

HE LITERALLY RAISED KA-ZAR... HAS BEEN ALMOST LIKE FAMILY TO SHANNA...

HE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL--AND I THINK HE'LL BE ABLE TO HELP US IN OUR MISSION.

BUT ONCE WE'RE IN SHANNA'S MIND...

WILL *YOU*?

... WILL HE UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S NOT THE REAL WORLD... THAT HIS REACTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE TEMPERED ACCORDINGLY?

BUTH HAS NO ANSWER...

AND THUS PREPARATIONS ARE LAID FOR WHAT MAY WELL BE THE STRANGEST JOURNEY EVER ATTEMPTED BY MAN--TO SAY NOTHING OF AERIAN, ANDROID, AND SABER-TOOTH!

SHANNA LIES ON A TABLE NEAR KA-ZAR'S MODULE, WITH BUTH, DHERK AND ZABU ALSO PROSTRATE BESIDE HER.

EACH WEARS A MIND-TRANSFER HEADPIECE, ALL CONNECTED TO A MAIN UNIT TO BE CONTROLLED BY GARVAN, DHERK'S CHIEF ASSISTANT AND A TOP AERIAN SCIENTIST...

IT IS GARVAN'S SIGNAL THAT WILL SEND THE FOUR SOJOURNERS ON THEIR WAY...

HERE'S SHANNA'S BRAIN WAVE--SEE HOW VIOLENTLY IT OSCILATES?

WHEN IT IS SERENE AND CALM, AN UN-BROKEN LINE, IT WILL BE TIME FOR DHERK AND HIS PARTY TO RETURN...

AND IF THEY FAIL...?

THEN I'M OBLIGATED TO BRING THEM BACK ANYWAY--IF I CAN.

POWER LEVEL'S RISING. HOLD FOR ONE MOMENT.

YES, GARVAN.

ABRUPTLY, SHANNA'S GLAZED EYES BLINK OPEN...

DADDY? WHA--

EEEEEEEEEE

SHE'S AWAKE, JEN! ADMINISTER A NERVE PINCH. WE MUST KEEP HER SEDATED, BUT I DON'T WANT TO RISK DRUGS...

EEYAH

IN MOMENTS...

SHE SLEEPS, GARVAN.

WE'LL MEET BY THE WATERFALL AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SAVAGE LAND, AGREED?

AGREED.

HEAR THAT ZABU?

RRRROOO

BUT WHAT ABOUT KA-ZAR? HE WON'T KNOW WHERE TO MEET US, OR EVEN WHERE HE *REALLY* IS!

ZABU WILL HELP US FIND KA-ZAR, AND WE'LL EXPLAIN IT ALL TO HIM. HE'LL UNDER-STAND.

ALL RIGHT, GARVAN. WE'RE READY.

GOOD. JUST RELAX NOW, GENTLEMEN, WE'LL TRY TO MAKE THIS...

... AS PLEASANT AS POSSIBLE.

MMM

MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

"THE WATERFALL, BUTH... CONCENTRATE NOW..."

ARE WE HERE? ALREADY? IS THAT IT?

GOOD WORK YOUR PEOPLE DO, BUTH...

YES, WE ARE AN AMAZING LO--

OHERK! ZABU SENSES SOMETHING!

RRRRR

THE GREAT CAT HESITATES ONLY A MOMENT, NOSE TWITCHING, FANGS GLEAMING--

--THEN DARTS OFF INTO THE THICKET...

HE'S ON TO SOMETHING, C'MON!

THE JUNGLE SEEMS... DIFFERENT THAN I REMEMBER IT SOMEHOW...

THAT'S BECAUSE *YOU'RE* NOT THE ONE REMEMBERING IT. THIS IS HOW *SHANNA* THINKS OF IT.

SOON...

IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS, OHERK?

YES, OUR FAVORITE BLONDE-HAIRED APEMAN... BUT WHAT'S HE DOING?

HIYA, FELLAS! YOU PART OF THIS CRAZY DREAM TOO? WILD! COME TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S WRAPPED AROUND MY ANKLE.

IT ISN'T A DREAM, KA-ZAR.

IT ISN'T?

COME TO RAMONA

COME TO--? *UURRGH!*

FIGHT IT, KA-ZAR, *FIGHT IT!* IT'S NO *DREAM!*

WHADDYA MEAN?! OF *COURSE* IT'S A DR--

--GOOD *LORD!*

HELLO, DARLING... YOU REMEMBER YOUR SWEET RAMONA, DON'T YOU-- *DON'T YOU??*

AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR RIPS THE DISTORTED JUNGLE CLEARING AS A SLEEK YELLOW FORM LUNGES FORTH...

ZABU! HE'LL SAVE ME!

NO, WAIT! H-HE'S SINKING INTO THAT BLACK MUCK!

COME TO ME, KA-ZAR--

--COME KISS YOUR LITTLE RAMONA...SHE'S LONELY FOR YOU... SHE'S--

AH-AH-- OH NO! BLASTED CAT--AH-- ALLERGIC--AH--AH--

CHOO

"RAMONA'S" SNEEZE LOOSENS HER GRIP--

AND--

GOTCHA! YOU'RE SAFE NOW!

NOT SO FAST, BUTH, ZABU'S STUCK TOO!

BUTH'S MASSIVE STRENGTH PULLS THE TIGER FREE...

...AND THWARTED, THE RAMONA-CREATURE SLIPS BACK BENEATH THE QUICK-SAND--

--AS THE TRAVELERS LOOK ON, AGHAST!

FRIEND OF YOURS, KA-ZAR?...

I WOULDN'T SAY "FRIEND" EXACTLY...

AS ZABU EXPRESSES HIS JOY AT SEEING HIS MASTER ALIVE AND WELL, DHERK EXPLAINS THEIR PREDICAMENT TO KA-ZAR...

...SO YOU SEE, THAT *THING* THAT ATTACKED YOU WAS SIMPLY SHANNA'S DISTORTED IMPRESSION OF SOMEONE SHE KNEW.

BELIEVE ME, IT'S NOT ALL THAT DISTORTED...

SO LET'S GO GET SHANNA AND BEAT IT OUT OF THIS CREEPY PLACE!

IT ISN'T THAT SIMPLE...

WE DON'T KNOW WHERE SHANNA IS, WE ONLY KNOW SHE'S TRAPPED SOMEWHERE WITHIN THIS MONSTROUS PLACE--

--UNABLE TO ESCAPE OR EVEN TO COMMUNICATE WITH US. WE'LL HAVE TO SEARCH FOR HER.

I'M GAME. WHERE DO WE START?

WHY NOT START AT THE BEGINNING?

YOU!? BUT, YOU'RE *DEAD*--

--MELE!

ONLY MY BODY IS DEAD. MY MEMORY LIVES ON HERE IN SHANNA'S MIND, ENHANCED, I MIGHT ADD, BY HER *FEELINGS* FOR ME!

OF COURSE, SHE REMEMBERS *OTHER* THINGS. SOME NOT SO PLEASANT.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?

;SIGH!- I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE *I* AM.

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED HERE! SHANNA'S MIND HAS BECOME A TERRIBLE, HAUNTED PLACE, A PLACE FILLED WITH GUILT AND PAIN!

KA-ZAR, I SAW YOUR DEATH IN SHANNA'S MIND. SHE PLAYS IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN. ARE YOU, TOO, JUST A MEMORY?

NO, MY FRIEND, THOUGH SHANNA IS CONVINCED I AM. WE'VE BEEN TRANSPORTED INTO HER MIND TO SAVE IT. PART OF THAT, APPARENTLY, IS SHOWING HER THAT I'M NOT A MEMORY, THAT I'M STILL ALIVE.

NEVER FEAR, THEN. I SHALL HELP YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS FIND OUR SHANNA! THIS WAY!

NOW THEY ARE FIVE. THEY TRAVEL SLOWLY PAST BURNT FORESTS AND GREY, ROTTING MEADOWS, UNCERTAIN OF WHERE THEY JOURNEY...

THEN...

THIS IS THE *LAND OF MEMORIES*. ALL THE EVENTS OF SHANNA'S LIFE HAVE BEEN STORED HERE. IT USED TO BE A PLACE OF HAPPINESS AND JOY, BUT LATELY THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING HAVE BUT PAIN AND SORROW.

OBSERVE...

DADDY, PLEASE--

PIPE DOWN, SHANNA! THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING IN THE BRUSH!

THAT'S SHANNA-- AS A CHILD!

SHE'S REMEMBER-ING...

NO DADDY! THAT'S NO LEOPARD! THAT'S--

BLAMM!

MOMMY!

;SOB!-MOMMY! ;SOB-SOB!-

SHANNA'S MOTHER WAS KILLED BY HER FATHER IN A HUNTING ACCIDENT. THAT'S WHY SHE HATES GUNS SO MUCH. POOR BABY...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DON'T CRY... DON'T CRY...

HIS FINGER TOUCHES A TENDER CHEEK, A CHILD CRYING... BUT GRADUALLY THE CHILD BECOMES ANOTHER CHILD LEFT MOTHER-LESS...

SHANNA! WHY DID YOU DESERT MEEEEEEEEEE

M-MELE, DID YOU SEE *THAT*? IT-IT WAS *LEILA! LEILA!* YOUR OWN DAUGHTER!

SHE, SHANNA AND I... WE COULD'VE BEEN SO HAPPY. IF ONLY--

LOOK! OVER THERE!

THE TRAVELERS CATCH THEIR BREATHS AS SHANNA APPEARS BEFORE THEM, RADIANT...

LOOK AT HER! SHE--SHE'S *WELL* AGAIN, DHERK!

I DON'T THINK SO, KA-ZAR. LOOK WHAT'S MATERIALIZING BEHIND HER--!

WHILE BACK IN THE LAB...

WHAT'S GOING ON?! THE LIGHTS ARE DIMMING! WE'RE LOSING POWER!

"THE POWER INDICATOR'S DIPPED BELOW SAFETY LEVEL!

"--NO, WAIT IT'S UP AGAIN!"

WHEW! THAT WAS A SCARE! A BLACK-OUT WOULD BE DISASTROUS! BUT EVERYTHING'S FINE NOW...

I HOPE...

IN SHANNA'S LAND OF MEMORIES, HOWEVER, EVERYTHING IS NOT FINE--AS SHE EMBARKS ON A CALVACADE OF SELF-TORTURE! FIRST BY REMEMBERING JULANI, THE BEAUTIFUL LEOPARD SHE TAMED IN HER YOUTH--

JULANI! JULANI!

--SLAIN BY A MISDIRECTED HUNTER'S BULLET!

BLAM

THEN PATRICK McSHANE, HER ONE-TIME FIANCÉ...

PATRICK?

NOOOOOO!

...MURDERED IN THE PRIME OF LIFE BY THE MUTANT PRIESTESS NEKRA!

THUD

EEEEEEEEE

SHE'S DESTROYING HERSELF! I'VE GOT TO HELP HER!

SHANNA! SHANNA, COME BACK! IT'S ME! KA-ZAR!

BUT SHANNA DOESN'T HEAR KA-ZAR.

SHE'S ONLY AWARE OF THE FIGURE IN FRONT OF HER: HER FATHER--

UNNHH!

DADDY!

--KILLED BY HER MORTAL ENEMY THE MANDRILL!

IN THE TREES ABOVE HER HEAD, MELE APPEARS...

SHANNA? WAIT, DARLING, LISTEN TO ME!

BUT HER MEMORY OF MELE'S DEATH IS STRONG AND DEEP, AND MOMENTS LATER HE FALLS TO THE GROUND, A SPEAR PROTRUDING FROM HIS CHEST!

MELE: CHOKE:-- NOT MELE, TOO!

THAT SPEAR... MY SPEAR! LIKE MY SPEAR THAT KILLED HIM ACCIDENTALLY IN REAL LIFE!

SHANNA, I CAN EXPLAIN. THIS IS JUST YOUR MEM--

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

H-HE'S DEAD...

NO, KA-ZAR, HE WAS *ALREADY* DEAD, REMEMBER? SHANNA IS *REMEMBERING* HIS DEATH, SO HE HAS DIED AGAIN.

WHEN SHE GETS WELL, HE WILL LIVE AGAIN IN HER MIND. IT'S OUR JOB TO MAKE HER WELL...

...BUT WE'LL HAVE TO *FIND* HER FIRST!

IT SEEMS THAT SHANNA BLAMES *HERSELF* FOR THE DEATHS OF THOSE SHE LOVED...

SHE TOLD ME ONCE THAT SHE WAS AFRAID TO LOVE *ME*, THAT EVERYONE SHE EVER LOVED HAD *DIED!*

SUBCONSCIOUSLY--IRRATIONALLY--SHE ALWAYS BLAMED HERSELF FOR THOSE DEATHS. WHEN SHE THOUGHT I WAS DEAD, IT DROVE HER WILD. THE DRUGS AND SHOCKS A.I.M. USED ON HER FINALLY PUSHED HER OVER THE EDGE.

BUT IF SHE KNEW I WAS *ALIVE!*...

BUT YOU'RE *NOT* ALIVE TO HER, KA-ZAR! LOOK!

I-IT LOOKS LIKE A *SHRINE!*

SO IT IS. A SHRINE TO HER LOST LOVE...

SNIF

WHY, THIS IS *ME! DEAD!*

AND LOOK, THERE'S A DEAD *ZABU*, TOO!...

GGRRRRR

SUDDENLY, FROM BENEATH THE CRACKED STONE FLOOR, ERUPTS A MYRIAD OF BLACK SLITHERING SNAKES!

THIS MUST BE SHANNA'S WAY OF PROTECTING HER HIDEOUS MEMORIES!

COULDN'T SHE HAVE JUST PUT UP A *FENCE?*

AND WHILE HAVOC REIGNS IN SHANNA'S MIND...

...AGAIN IN THE LABORATORY THE POWER EBBS--AGAIN THE INDICATOR DIPS BELOW THE SAFETY LEVEL, THEN RISES ONCE MORE...

SOMETHING IS DRAINING *POWER* FROM OUR SOURCE-- BUT *WHAT?*

PERHAPS THE MACHINES THAT CONTROL OUR CLIMATE ARE MALFUNCTIONING.

BUT I THOUGHT DHERK FIXED ALL THAT LONG AGO.

IF THERE'S A SEVERE OUTAGE WHILE THEY'RE IN HER MIND...THEY'RE ALL *DOOMED!*

WHILE...

PROTECT YOURSELVES, MEN!

HOLD STILL, ZABU!

GRRRRR

SSSSSSSS!

KA-ZAR, HELP ME! IT'S CRUSHING MY RIBS!

WHAT THESE MONSTROSITIES NEED--

--IS A REAL *SLICE OF LIFE!*

SSSSKK

AND SO FALLS THE LAST OF THE SERPENTS.

THE FOUR WEARY TRAVELERS LEAVE THE SHRINE AND PROCEED INTO THE DARKNESS, WHERE BLACK SKELETAL TREES RISE AGAINST A GREENISH MOON...

SOON THEY SIGHT A TOWER OFF IN THE DISTANCE, A TOWER MADE OF COILING BLACK LIMBS...

AND, AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER, IMPRISONED BY HER OWN NIGHTMARISH VISION, IS SHANNA...

THERE SHE IS! MELE WAS RIGHT! SHE REALLY *IS* KEEPING HERSELF A PRISONER OF HER OWN MIND! LET'S GO GET HER!

I'LL FLY UP AND START TO FREE HER!

HOLD ON! IT WON'T BE THAT EASY! SOMETHING *KEEPS* SHANNA LOCKED AWAY IN THAT TOWER. IT MAY SIMPLY BE HER OWN *GUILT*, BUT IN HER INSANE MIND THAT GUILT MAY TAKE A *DANGEROUS SHAPE*! BE *CAREFUL*!

THE LANOSCAPE IS BLEAK AND BARREN, CHILLING AND FOREBIDDING...AND WORSE, UNKNOWN.

THE QUARTET STARTS TOWARO THE TOWER, WITH TREPIDATION, WATCHING CAREFULLY, PROCEEDING WITH CAUTION...

THE PATH SEEMS SAFE ENOUGH SO FAR...

TOO SAFE.

LORD KA-ZAR, WAIT!

WHAT IS IT?

I-I'M NOT SURE... A *FEELING*... SOMETHING IN THE AIR...SOMETHING--

SUDDENLY--

I KILLED PATRICK McSHANE WITH MY BARE HANDS--

--AND I'LL DO THE SAME TO YOU!

:CHOKE: ATTACKED-- FROM BEHIND, WHO--?!

:AGH!:

N-:CHOKE: *NEKRA*... THE MUTANT PRIESTESS OF HATE!

HAHAHAHA HAHAHAAAHA

BUT IN A FLASHING YELLOW BLUR...

RR...OAR!

ZABU!

DEEEE

RRRK!!

THANK THE GODS!

BUT NEKRA MAKES A LIGHTNING RECOVERY...

MY POWERS, DEAR KA-ZAR, ARE BEYOND THOSE OF EVEN YOUR LITTLE PET! HA-HA-HA-HA!

NO!

GOOD BOY, ZABU!

GRROWL!

THAT WAS NEKRA, AN OLD ENEMY OF SHANNA'S. SHE KILLED SHANNA'S FIANCE, BUT SHE'S *ONE* NIGHTMARE WHO WON'T GIVE US ANY MORE TROUBLE.

BUTH, YOU FLY TO THE TOP OF THE TOWER AND SEE IF THERE'S A WAY IN. DHERK AND I WILL TAKE THE STAIRS, WHILE ZABU STANDS GUARD HERE.

SHANNA! WE'VE COME TO RESCUE YOU!

B-BUTH? IS IT YOU?

THE KEY IS IN THE LOCK! *TURN* IT!

NO... NO... I CAN'T!

THIS IS WHERE I BELONG, DON'T YOU SEE?

I-I KILLED THEM *ALL*! ;SOB!;

I LOVED THEM AND THEY *DIED*! I DON'T *DESERVE* TO BE FREE!

BUT, SHANNA-- *KA-ZAR'S* STILL *ALIVE*!

;SOB; *ALIVE*?...

"YES, DOWN AT THE BASE OF THE TOWER --

"--STARTING THE CLIMB UP TO YOU!"

SHE TREMBLES WITH INDECISION...

...THEN REACHES FOR THE KEY...

BUT BEFORE SHE CAN TURN IT, A SUDDEN NIGHTMARISH STORM ERUPTS AND WHIRLS SAVAGELY 'ROUND THE TOWER!

AND BELOW...

AGGH! DHERK! MY HEAD! I-- I'M LOSING STRENGTH!

NO! *KA-ZAR!!*

HE'S DYING AGAIN, BUTH. I CAN *FEEL* IT!

IN THE MEANTIME, BACK IN AERIE SHALAN...

...A REAL STORM BUFFETS THE CITY...

AND INSIDE THE LAB...

SIR! I CAN'T TELL EXACTLY HOW...BUT SOMETHING IS WREAKING HAVOC WITH OUR POWER LEVELS... HERE--AND ALL OVER THE CITY!

"ENERGY LEVEL'S DOWN 50 PERCENT!"

"IF IT DOESN'T STOP FALLING, WE'LL LOSE KA-ZAR!"

THE OUTTAGE MUST BE AFFECTING SHANNA'S MIND--

--THE BRAIN-WAVE METER'S GOING WILD!

SHANNA'S DREAMWORLD...

HE'S DYING... AGAIN...AND IT'S MY FAULT!...

WHILE...

THE LIFE-RESTORATION UNIT IS FAILING!

KA-ZAR'S BREATHING... HIS PULSE RATE--THEY'RE BECOMING ERRATIC!

...MY FAULT!

WE'RE LOSING OUR GRIP ON OUR TRAVELERS! THEY'RE IN DANGER! PUSH ALL MACHINERY TO FULL CAPACITY!

YES, GARVAN!

SHANNA'S INNER WORLD IS NOW A BLUR OF PAIN. HER MIND-SELF REELS, READY TO SLIP BACK TOWARD IRREVOCABLE MADNESS AS HER LOVE, ONCE MORE, DIES BEFORE HER VERY EYES...

SHE KNOWS THAT SHE AND SHE ALONE CAN FORESTALL KA-ZAR'S DEATH, FOR IT IS THROUGH THE MACHINATIONS OF HER RAVAGED MIND THAT HIS LIFE IS ENDANGERED!

SHE KNOWS THIS--AND THE KNOWLEDGE PARALYZES HER WITH TERROR!

SUDDENLY, FROM OUT OF NOWHERE ERUPTS AN ANCIENT ENEMY-- SHANNA'S ONE-TIME RIVAL FOR KAZAR'S LOVE-- LEANNE!

YOU'LL NEVER HAVE HIM, SHANNA! I'LL KILL HIM FIRST!

NOW CLOSE YOUR EYES, HANDSOME. LEANNE KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU!

LEANNE-- BUT SHE'S CHANGING...

"... INTO SHANNA'S IDEA OF LEANNE."

THIS WON'T HURT A BIT!

THE LEANNE-DRAGON REARS BACK ITS HIDEOUS HEAD AND--

--ENCIRCLES KA-ZAR WITH A RING OF FIRE!

KA-ZAR!!

HELP ME... SOME-BODY...

HOT ENOUGH FOR YOU, KA-ZAR MY LOVE? HA-HA! HA-HA!

HIS MIND-VOYAGING FORM REFLECTING THE CRISIS OF HIS REAL BODY, KA-ZAR WRITHES IN AGONY...

...AS THE CIRCLE OF FLAME DRAWS CLOSER AND CLOSER.

SHANNA WATCHES ALL THIS IN HORROR, WHILE A GREAT BATTLE RAGES WITHIN HER. IT WOULD BE SO EASY, SO PLEASANT TO SUCCUMB TO THE MADNESS... TO GIVE UP AND DO NOTHING WHILE THE MAN SHE LOVES DIES AGAIN!

IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO GIVE IN...BUT SOMETHING THERE IS INSIDE THIS SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL THAT WILL TAKE NO MORE.

IT HAS COME DOWN TO A CHOICE BETWEEN MADNESS AND LOVE...

SHE CHOOSES LOVE.

THE KEY TURNS EFFORTLESSLY IN THE LOCK AND SHE FLIES DOWN THE STAIRS...

SHANNA, LOOK OUT! THE DRAGON--IT SEES YOU!

A BOLT OF FIRE SEARS HER PATH --

--THEN ANOTHER--

WHAT'S THE MATTER, HONEY? SCARED TO STAND AND FIGHT ME?

SHE'S TRYING TO GOAD ME INTO BATTLING HER, BUT I WON'T DO IT-- I COULD LOSE BOTH MY LIFE *AND* KA-ZAR'S!

I CAN'T BE DIVERTED-- I'VE *GOT* TO SAVE KEVIN!

MEANWHILE, BUTH DECIDES TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE --

DON'T WORRY, SHANNA, I'M COMING TO--

--OOF!

-- BUT IS TACKLED WELL SHORT OF HIS GOAL BY HIS OWN ALLY!

DHERK--WHY?

THIS IS SHANNA'S BATTLE! SHE MUST FIGHT AND WIN IT HERSELF--THEREBY RECLAIMING HER SANITY!

THOUGH WE RISK OUR OWN PSYCHES--AND LIVES-- BY HOLDING BACK, OUR VOYAGE WILL HAVE BEEN FOR *NOTHING* IF WE INTERFERE NOW.

WATCH OUT, YOU FEEBLE SIMP! THAT FIRE WILL MELT AWAY YOUR *PERFECT* SKIN! HA-HA-HA!

AGAIN, A MOMENT OF INDECISION, THEN--

--SHE LEAPS THROUGH THE DANCING FLAMES, UNHARMED!

SEE, BUTH, SHE'S DOING IT--SHE'S CURING HERSELF!

KEVIN DARLING, CAN YOU WALK?

I-I THINK SO...

THROUGH THE FIRE THEY GO...

... BUT THEN--

NO... TOO WEAK TO GO ANY FURTHER. LEAVE ME... SAVE YOURSELF...

NO! I WON'T LET YOU DIE AGAIN! I WON'T!

I'LL CARRY YOU.

HER BURDEN IS HEAVY, BUT LOVE GIVES HER UNTOLD STRENGTH...

HURRY, YOU GUYS! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! WE'LL BE SAFE FROM HER FLAME IN THE *WATERFALL!*

THE HIDEOUS LEANNE-DRAGON IN PURSUIT, THEY FLEE IN THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THEY'VE COME, PAST THE SHRINE, PAST THE BODIES OF SHANNA'S BELOVED, BACK THROUGH THE BLACKENED FOREST...

BUT JUST A HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE WATER-FALL ENTRANCE, SHANNA STUMBLES--

NO! KEVIN!

BUTH! SHANNA'S PASSED THE MOST CRUCIAL TEST! WE NEED TO BUY HER SOME *TIME!*

THIS *TREE!*

GOTCHA!

BUTH GUIDES, THE SUPER-STRONG ANDROID'S PUSH, AND--

CRASH!

GETTING BY *THAT* OUGHT TO SLOW HER DOWN FOR AWHILE!

WHY HASN'T GARVAN RETURNED US BY NOW? SHANNA'S BRAINWAVE SCANS MUST BE READING CLOSE TO NORMAL, IF HER BEHAVIOR IS ANY INDICATION...

EVEN A *SANE* PERSON'S MIND HARBORS TERROR ENOUGH TO BE DANGEROUS TO US.

COULD SOMETHING HAVE GONE WRONG IN THE LAB, DHERK?

JUST THEN, SUDDENLY--MYSTERIOUSLY--THE SKIES SURROUNDING **AERIE SHALAN** CLEAR, AND INSIDE THE LAB, POWER RETURNS TO ALL MACHINERY...

GARVAN--WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW BUT OUR MAIN CONCERN NOW IS *KA-ZAR!*

POSITION THE ALPHA-PARTICLE PROJECTOR! *NOW!*

"IF WE LOSE HIM...

"...YOU'LL ANSWER TO *ME!*"

HE'S RESPONDING! I THINK HE'S GOING TO MAKE IT!

AND INSIDE SHANNA'S MIND, LIFE PULSES BACK INTO KA-ZAR'S FORM...

DARLING, YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!

YEAH, I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO TELL THAT GUY AT THE SHRINE TO SHOVE OVER!

DON'T GET TOO COZY, WE'VE STILL GOT A DRAGON TO FIGHT!

THEN LET'S DO IT!

AND WHAT AN ASSAULT IT IS!

I THOUGHT I LOVED YOU ONCE, LEANNE--

--ONLY YOU AIN'T SO LOVABLE *NOW!*

AIIEEEE

WITH SHANNA'S RECOVERY NOW A SEEMING CERTAINTY, DHERK ENCOURAGES--AND JOINS IN--THE ASSAULT.

WHILE, IN THE LAB...

WONDERFUL--KA-ZAR'S VITAL SIGNS HAVE ALL STABILIZED!

GARVAN--

LOOK AT THIS!

SHANNA'S BRAIN-WAVE METER IS REGISTERING WITHIN NORMAL RANGE!

THEY'VE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR MISSION!

LET'S BRING THEM BACK, FOLKS!

I CLAIM THIS DRAGON IN THE NAME OF--

QUIT CLOWNING, BUTH. THAT'S MY DEPARTMENT!

SHHH, YOU TWO! LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR A BUZZING SOUND?

HEY, I FEEL KINDA WEIRD...

IT'S GARVAN! HE'S BRINGING US BACK!

DHERK--WHY ISN'T SHANNA FADING, TOO--?

I'M ALREADY *IN* MY RIGHT BODY--

--AND IN MY RIGHT *MIND* AGAIN, TOO, THANKS TO YOU!

DON'T WORRY, DARLING...

... I'LL...

... BE...

...SEEING...

...YOU...

EVERYONE PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, SIR!

FINE! LET'S UNSTRAP THEM BEFORE THEY COME TO!

GARVAN, I--

REST NOW, DHERK... THANK ME *LATER*!

ZABU AWAKENS AND IMMEDIATELY GOES TO KA-ZAR'S MODULE, WHERE HE WILL KEEP HIS VIGIL BY HIS MASTER'S SIDE...

GARVAN LOOKS UPON SHANNA'S AWAKENING FACE WITH WONDER...

HOW *BEAUTIFUL* SHE IS, WITH THE ILLNESS GONE FROM HER MIND!

WHA--? I-- OHHHHH, WHAT A NIGHTMARE!

B-BUT IT REALLY HAPPENED, DIDN'T IT? IT *REALLY HAPPENED!* WHERE'S KEVIN? IS HE ALL RIGHT?

K-KEVIN?

SWEET-HEART, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

DARLING, IT'S SHANNA! I LOVE YOU!

SHANNA?...

YOU *DID* IT, SHANNA! HE'S COME OUT OF HIS COMA!

HO DRAY!

CAN WE GO HOME NOW, DARLING?

I'D *LOVE* TO! I FEEL LIKE A *TEST-TUBE BABY* IN THIS THING!

BETTER GIVE HIM A COUPLE OF WEEKS, SHANNA!

GIVE ME MORE THAN THAT, SHANNA. A *LIFETIME* OUGHT TO BE SUFFICIENT!

ARE YOU *PROPOS-ING?*...

THAT'S WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE...YAWN!... TELL YOU WHEN I WAKE UP...

KA-ZAR OOZES PEACEFULLY... BUT A SUDDEN WAVE OF UNCERTAINTY SWEEPS OVER SHANNA, AN APPREHENSION...

LEANNE!

I CAN SENSE HER PRESENCE! ALMOST AS IF SHE WERE HERE IN THIS ROOM!

NO...THAT'S NOT POS-SIBLE... I'M BEING SILLY...

LEANNE'S IN A COMA... MAYBE EVEN *DEAD* BY NOW.

IT'S JUST MY IMAGINATION... A RESIDUE OF THAT DREAM-DRAGON...

AND NO GHOST FROM THE PAST IS GOING TO SPOIL THIS MOMENT FOR ME!

BUT GHOSTS HAVE A WAY OF TURNING UP JUST WHEN YOU DON'T WANT THEM TO.

NEXT: **TROUBLE IN PARADISE!**